

Claims

**What is claimed is:**

1. In a computer implemented system for storing and manipulating customer purchase information received from a plurality of sources, the computer system comprising a storage device for storing the customer purchase information and a processor for placing the customer purchase information, a  
5 method for organizing the customer purchase information comprising the steps of:

creating an organizational structure in the storage device, wherein the organizational structure comprises a plurality of categories, each category  
10 comprising a plurality of sub-categories arranged in a hierarchy;  
receiving the customer purchase information; and  
placing the customer purchase information into at least one of the plurality of categories and the plurality of sub-categories using the processor.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of placing  
15 customer purchase information further comprises:

placing the customer purchase information in a first sub-category; and

placing the customer information in one of the sub-category or the category above the first sub-category in the hierarchy.

- 20 3. The method according to claim 2, further comprising the step of

creating a customer preference based on the customer purchase information and the category and sub-category where the customer purchase information is located.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the customer  
5 purchase information comprises at least one of:

- (a) a dollar amount of a customer purchase;
- (b) a city where a customer purchase was made;
- (c) a state where a customer purchase was made; and
- (d) a store where a customer purchase was made.

- 10 5. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of creating a customer preference based on the customer purchase information and the category and sub-category where the customer purchase information is located.

6. The method according to claim 1, wherein customer purchase  
15 information comprises customer purchase data for a plurality of individual customer purchases; and

wherein the step of placing customer purchase information comprises placing the customer purchase data for an individual customer purchase into at least one predetermined category or sub-category.

- 20 7. The method according to claim 1, wherein the customer purchase information is based on a method of payment, wherein the method of payment comprises at least one of:

- (a) credit card purchases;

(b) debit card purchases; and

(c) cheque purchases.

8. The method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of  
modifying the organizational structure based on the received customer purchase  
5 information.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein the step of modifying  
includes at least one of:

(a) adding a category;

(b) adding a sub-category;

10 (c) deleting a category;

(d) deleting a sub-category;

(e) merging a category; and

(f) merging a sub-category.

10. The method according to claim 1, wherein the step of placing the  
15 customer purchase information further comprises using a link file to direct the  
processor, the link file comprising a plurality of instructions directing the  
processor to place customer purchase information in a predetermined location  
in the organizational structure.

11. The method according to claim 6, further comprising the step of  
20 creating a customer preference based on the placement of the customer  
purchase information into the at least one predetermined category or sub-  
category.

12. The method according to claim 11, wherein the step of creating a customer preference further comprises:

combining customer purchase information for an individual customer located within a particular category or sub-category;

5 assigning a value to the combined customer purchase information; and  
creating a customer preference based on the assigned value.

13. The method according to claim 12, wherein the step of assigning a value includes assigning a value based on dollar amount of purchases made by a customer over a predetermined period of time.

10 14. The method according to claim 10, wherein the predetermined location in the organizational structure is determined based on the customer purchase information.

15 15. The method according to claim 12, further comprising the steps of:

creating a customer account; and

placing the customer preference in the customer account.

16. A system for manipulating customer purchase information received from a plurality of sources comprising:

means for creating an organizational structure in a storage means,

20 wherein the organizational structure comprises a plurality of categories, each category comprising a plurality of sub-categories arranged in a hierarchy;

means for receiving the customer purchase information; and

means for placing the customer purchase information into at least one of the plurality of categories and the plurality of sub-categories using the processor.

17. The system according to claim 16, wherein the means for placing  
5 customer purchase information further comprises:

means for placing the customer purchase information in a first sub-category; and

means for placing the customer information in one of the sub-category or the category above the first sub-category in the hierarchy.

10 18. The system according to claim 17, further comprising means for creating a customer preference based on the customer purchase information and the category and sub-category where the customer purchase information is located.

19. The system according to claim 16, wherein the customer  
15 purchase information comprises at least one of:

- (a) a dollar amount of a customer purchase;
- (b) a city where a customer purchase was made;
- (c) a state where a customer purchase was made; and
- (d) a store where a customer purchase was made.

20 20. The system according to claim 16, further comprising means for creating a customer preference based on the customer purchase information and the category and sub-category where the customer purchase information is located.

21. The system according to claim 16, wherein customer purchase information comprises customer purchase data for a plurality of individual customer purchases; and

wherein the means for placing customer purchase information comprises  
5 means for placing the customer purchase data for an individual customer purchase into at least one predetermined category or sub-category.

22. The system according to claim 16, wherein the customer purchase information is based on a method of payment, wherein the method of payment comprises at least one of:

- 10 (a) credit card purchases; \_\_\_\_\_  
(b) debit card purchases; and  
(c) cheque purchases.

23. The system according to claim 16, further comprising means for modifying the organizational structure based on the received customer purchase  
15 information.

24. The system according to claim 23, wherein modifying the organizational structure comprises at least one of:

- (a) adding a category;  
(b) adding a sub-category;  
20 (c) deleting a category;  
(d) deleting a sub-category;  
(e) merging a category; and  
(f) merging a sub-category.

25. The system according to claim 16, wherein the means for placing the customer purchase information further comprises means for using a link file to direct the processor, the link file comprising a plurality of instructions directing the processor to place customer purchase information in a  
5 predetermined location in the organizational structure.

26. The system according to claim 21, further comprising means for creating a customer preference based on the placement of the customer purchase information into the at least one predetermined category or sub-category.

10 27. The system according to claim 26, wherein the means for creating a customer preference further comprises:

means for combining customer purchase information for an individual customer located within a particular category or sub-category;

15 means for assigning a value to the combined customer purchase information; and

means for creating a customer preference based on the assigned value.

28. The system according to claim 27, wherein the means for assigning a value includes means for assigning a value based on dollar amount of purchases made by a customer over a predetermined period of time.

20 29. The system according to claim 25, wherein the predetermined location in the organizational structure is determined based on the customer purchase information.

30. The method according to claim 27, further comprising:

means for creating a customer account; and

means for placing the customer preference in the customer account.

31. In a computer implemented system for storing and manipulating customer purchase information received from a plurality of sources, the  
5 computer system comprising a purchase storage device for receiving the customer purchase information, an organizational structure storage device for storing the customer account information, and a processor for accessing and placing the customer purchase information, the method of creating a customer account comprising the steps of:

10 receiving customer purchase information at the purchase storage device;  
accessing the customer purchase information from the purchase storage device;

placing the customer purchase information in a predetermined location in the organizational structure storage device; and

15 creating a customer preference based on the placement of the customer purchase information in the organizational structure storage device.

32. The method according to claim 31, wherein the step of placing the customer purchase information includes using a link file to direct the processor.

20 33. The method according to claim 32, wherein the link file comprises a plurality of instructions directing the processor to access predetermined customer purchase information and place the accessed customer



purchase information in a predetermined location in the organizational structure storage device.

34. The method according to claim 32, further comprising the step creating an organizational structure in the organizational structure storage  
5 device, wherein the organizational structure comprises a plurality of categories, each category comprising a plurality of sub-categories arranged in a hierarchy.

35. The method according to claim 34, wherein the link file comprises a plurality of instructions directing the processor to access predetermined customer purchase information and place the accessed customer  
10 purchase information in a predetermined category or sub-category of the organization structure.

36. The method according to claim 31, wherein the predetermined location in the organizational structure storage device is determined based on the customer purchase information.

15 37. The method according to claim 31, wherein the customer purchase information is based on a method of payment, wherein the method of payment comprises at least one of:

- (a) credit card purchases;
- (b) debit card purchases; and
- 20 (c) cheque purchases.

38. The method according to claim 31, further comprising the step creating an organizational structure in the organizational structure storage

device, wherein the organizational structure comprises a plurality of categories, each category comprising a plurality of sub-categories arranged in a hierarchy.

39. The method according to claim 38, wherein customer purchase information includes customer purchase data for a plurality of individual

5 customer purchases; and

wherein the step of placing customer purchase information includes placing the customer purchase data for an individual customer purchase into at least one predetermined category or sub-category.

40. The method according to claim 38, further comprising the steps  
10 of modifying the organizational structure based on the received customer purchase information.

41. The method according to claim 40, wherein the step of modifying comprises at least one of:

- (a) adding a category;
- 15 (b) adding a sub-category;
- (c) deleting a category;
- (d) deleting a sub-category;
- (e) merging a category; and
- (f) merging a sub-category.

20 42. The method according to claim 31, wherein the step of creating a customer preference further comprises:

combining customer purchase information for an individual customer located within a particular category or sub-category;

assigning a value to the combined customer purchase information; and  
creating a customer preference based on the assigned value.

43. The method according to claim 42, wherein the step of assigning  
a value includes assigning a value based on dollar amount of purchase made by  
5 a customer over a predetermined period of time.

44. The method according to claim 42, further comprising the steps  
of:

creating a customer account; and

placing the customer preference in the customer account.

10 45. A system for manipulating customer purchase information  
received from a plurality of sources comprising:

means for receiving customer purchase information;

means for accessing the customer purchase information and placing the  
customer purchase information in a predetermined location in an organizational  
15 structure storage means; and

means for creating a customer preference based on the placement of the  
customer purchase information in the organizational structure storage means.

46. The system according to claim 44, wherein placing the customer  
purchase information includes using a link file to direct the means for accessing  
20 and placing.

47. The method according to claim 46, wherein the link file  
comprises a plurality of instructions directing the accessing and placing means  
to access predetermined customer purchase information and place the accessed

customer purchase information in a predetermined location in the  
organizational structure storage means.

48. The system according to claim 46, further comprising means for  
creating an organizational structure in the organizational structure storage  
5 means, wherein the organizational structure comprises a plurality of categories,  
each category comprising a plurality of sub-categories arranged in a hierarchy.

49. The system according to claim 48, wherein the link file  
comprises a plurality of instructions directing the accessing and placing means  
to access predetermined customer purchase information and place the accessed  
10 customer purchase information in a predetermined category or sub-category of  
the organization structure.

50. The system according to claim 45, wherein the predetermined  
location in the organizational structure storage means is determined based on  
the customer purchase information.

15 51. The system according to claim 45, wherein the customer  
purchase information is based on a method of payment, wherein the method of  
payment comprises at least one of:

- (a) credit card purchases;
- (b) debit card purchases; and
- 20 (c) cheque purchases.

52. The system according to claim 45, further comprising means for  
creating an organizational structure in the organizational structure storage

means, wherein the organizational structure comprises a plurality of categories, each category comprising a plurality of sub-categories arranged in a hierarchy.

53. The system according to claim 52, wherein customer purchase information includes customer purchase data for a plurality of individual

5 customer purchases; and

wherein the means for accessing and placing customer purchase information includes means for placing the customer purchase data for an individual customer purchase into at least one predetermined category or sub-category.

10 54. The system according to claim 52, further comprising means for modifying the organizational structure based on the received customer purchase information.

55. The system according to claim 54, wherein modifying the organizational structure comprises at least one of:

- 15 (a) adding a category;
- (b) adding a sub-category;
- (c) deleting a category;
- (d) deleting a sub-category;
- (e) merging a category; and
- 20 (f) merging a sub-category.

56. The system according to claim 45, wherein the means for creating a customer preference further comprises:

means for combining customer purchase information for an individual customer located within a particular category or sub-category;

means for assigning a value to the combined customer purchase information; and

5 means for creating a customer preference based on the assigned value.

57. The system according to claim 56, wherein assigning a value includes assigning a value based on dollar amount of purchase made by a customer over a predetermined period of time.

58. The system according to claim 56, further comprising:

10 means for creating a customer account; and

means for placing the customer preference in the customer account.